



Art Forgery: The History of a Modern Obsession

Thierry Lenain

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The art world has become increasingly obsessed with verifying and ensuring artistic authenticity especially with the recent advent of technologies that make detecting art forgeries a more certain science. In *Art Forgery: The History of a Modern Obsession*, rather than suggesting new methods of detection, it is the genealogy of faking as well as the anxious, sometimes neurotic, reactions triggered in the modern world of art by these clever frauds that are examined.

Art Forgery delves back into history by exploring the prevalence of forgery in the Middle Ages, when the issue of false relics and miracles often arose. During this time, if a relic gave rise to a cult, it would often be considered as genuine even if it obviously had been forged. Thierry Lenain's account charts the changing status of art forgery from the time of its appearance in the Renaissance, when it was initially hailed as a true artistic feat, to its condemnation as the art crime par excellence. Even Michelangelo, the most revered artist of this period, copied drawings by other masters lent to him by unsuspecting collectors. Michelangelo would even keep the original for himself and return the copy in its place. *Art Forgery* also examines the work and attitude of modern master forgers including Eric Hebborn, Thomas Keating and Han van Meegeren, whose productions baffled the art world during their time.

Ultimately, *Art Forgery* proposes that the science of accurately deciphering an individual artist's unique characteristics has reached a level of forensic sophistication matched only by the forger's skill and the art world's paranoia.

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